

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 TUNIS 06892 140756Z

16

ACTION PM-07

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EUR-25 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03

SS-20 USIA-15 ACDA-19 IO-14 OMB-01 NEA-10 DRC-01 /158 W

----- 129615

R 121535Z DEC 73

FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO COMSIXTHFLT

INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 3923

AMEMBASSY VALLETTA

C O N F I D E N T I A L TUNIS 6892

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR, TS

SUBJ: SIXTH FLEET VISITS

REF: YOUR 101936Z DEC 73 (NOTAL)

1. EMBASSY HAS NOTED REQUESTS FOR DIPLOMATIC CLEARANCES CONTAINED PARA ONE REFTEL. BOTH HOWEVER PRESENT POTENTIAL PROBLEMS WITHIN CONTEXT OUR CONTINUING CONCERN THAT WE NOT OVERLOAD CIRCUIT HERE.

2. WE WOULD NORMALLY BE MOST RELUCTANT TO REQUEST TWO-WEEK VISIT FOR ANY ONE SHIP IN BELIEF THAT TWO-WEEK STAY PROVIDES TOO PROLONGED EXPOSURE TO U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE EVEN IN RELATIVELY ISOLATED PORT SUCH AS BIZERTE. WE HAVE NOT IN FACT DONE SO IN PAST THREE YEARS (AND PROBABLY LONGER - OUR RECORDS DO NOT GO BACK FURTHER). WE ASSUME, HOWEVER, THAT PROPOSED VISIT OF USS BASILONE IS IN RESPONSE TO DISCUSSIONS WITH GOT NAVAL PERSONNEL DURING VISIT OF COMSIXTHFLT CONCERNING POSSIBLE ONE TIME ASSISTANCE TO TUNISIAN NAVAL REPAIR FACILITIES AT BIZERTE. REQUEST YOU CONFIRM. IN MEANTIME, AND ON BASIS THIS ASSUMPTION, EMBASSY WILL CHECK WITH TUNISIAN CNO JEDIDI RE APPROPRIATENESS OF TIMING.

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PAGE 02 TUNIS 06892 140756Z

IF VISIT IS FOR THIS PURPOSE AND TIMING AGREEABLE

TO TUNISIANS, WE WILL GO AHEAD AND REQUEST CLEARANCE
AS PROPOSED.

3. WE HAVE NOT IN PAST THREE YEARS REQUESTED CLEARANCE
FOR MORE THAN ONE SHIP PER VISIT EXCEPT UNDER UNUSUAL
CIRCUMSTANCES (MARCH 1973 FLOOD, E.G.), AND DO NOT
BELIEVE WE SHOULD DO SO NOW. IN OUR JUDGMENT,
PARTICULARLY IN LIGHT MIDDLE EAST SITUATION, CON-
CURRENT VISIT TO TUNISIA BY THREE SHIPS, ONE A
CARRIER, WOULD BE PUSHING TUNISIANS TOO HARD. RECENT
SUCCESSFUL VISIT TO COMSIXTHFLT SHOULD NOT BE INTER-
PRETED TO MEAN THAT TUNISIAN DOORS ARE WIDE OPEN.
TUNISIANS DO WANT CONTINUED VISITS BY SIXTH FLEET
SHIPS, BUT NOTHING HAS CHANGED OUR BELIEF THAT IT
BOTH IN THEIR INTEREST AND OURS THAT THESE BE WELL
SPACED AND IN MODERATION. ACCORDINGLY, UNLESS THERE
ARE COMPELLING REASONS FOR VISIT OF THREE SHIPS AT
ONCE WHICH NOT EVIDENT FROM REFTEL, WE PREPARED RE-
QUEST CLEARANCE FOR ONLY ONE SHIP FOR PERIOD MARCH
1-4 INDICATED REFTEL. IN ADDITION, AS SIXTHFLT AWARE,
WE HAVE CAREFULLY FOLLOWED ROTATION POLICY INVOLVING
FOUR TUNISIAN PORTS. SINCE MOST RECENT VISIT WAS TO
TUNIS, WE ASK THAT MARCH VISIT BE SCHEDULED FOR EITHER
RWSFAX OR SOUSSE.

4. WE WOULD ALSO WISH KNOW PURPOSE OF PROPOSED
LOCAL HELO OPERATIONS AS MENTIONED PARA 2 REFTEL
BEFORE RAISING THIS MATTER WITH TUNISIANS.
SEELYE

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